



ORTHO2

Become Your Brand

We've all heard the saying, "Seek and ye shall find." In other words, when we look closely, we will find that the answer to our particular query has been right in front of us all along.

True, it may not always be in plain sight, but it is there. If you look hard enough you will find what you seek, though likely not where you thought it would be. This is often the case when it comes to our marketing efforts.

So many among us are hunting for the holy grail of marketing—the secret to unlocking excess income potential, drawing in legions of new clients, and making a prominent mark in the orthodontic arena. These seekers are willing to pay thousands of dollars in this pursuit, all the while never realizing that it's not the money that counts, but rather the creativity and thought it takes to establish an image and a campaign that is an extension of their individual practice, one that speaks to who they are and what they believe.

It's like the old saying, "If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything." This is the trap into which many

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of us slip. We believe that if we put enough money into something, we will succeed. But when it comes to marketing our orthodontic practices, success relies much more on the thought, effort, and ingenuity we put into it than the money we put behind it. That's the stand you have to take, believing that it is you, not your finances that will lead you to your marketing pinnacle. So here it is, the secret to marketing success, the insight to reach your potential, the holy grail of orthodontic marketing greatness: **Create your own Signature Brand.**

You've heard the term "branding" before and it's certain

by **LeeAnn Peniche**

that you know the premier brands out there. Think about it. The most successful brands have become household names, even replacing the product they represent. A primary example of this is Band-Aid... When minor injuries occur, we cover our cuts and scrapes not with just a sticky bandage, but with a Band-Aid. Let's face it, "We're stuck on Band-Aid." Poor Curad just can't compete. The same is true of a number of other successful brands... think Chapstick and FedEx... They have eclipsed their competitors and become the name we use when we refer to a genre of product. In the same way, we as a practice want to become "the name" in orthodontics. We want to be the brand that eclipses all the rest.

Recently, I spoke with a new client who was frustrated with his decline in new patients. He moaned about the economy, complained that he had invested in several new technologies, and grumbled that he had purchased every gadget, bell, and whistle and all the monthly support that goes along with said gadgets. But this doctor had not taken the time to invest in his own community, schools, and patients at a meaningful level. Although he had

written checks for charities, fundraisers, schools, and sport teams, when I inquired as to how his teams did during the season, he had no idea. I asked how many patients and professional partners joined in the charity race. I asked if the fundraiser met the goals. Not surprisingly, he had no clue.

I explained the difference between the practices who

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simply survive an economic downturn and those who continue to thrive. The biggest factor? The ones who walk the walk always come out ahead. They attend events, track fundraising results, share the message, spread the word, and donate time. They are more than a checkbook. They are active in their community and in touch with needs of their neighbors. These involved and caring practices are "the name" in orthodontics. They possess and promote their own Signature Brand.

In this economic climate, it is especially important to pay attention... to your target market, your community climate, and the atmosphere all around you. Our target is a blend of alpha moms (leaders of the pack who influence how other moms spend) and generation "G" (the generation that cares about giving back). These two influential groups expect technology, progressive treatment and excellence. They seek out community leaders who are committed to excellence and are willing to make a difference on a visible scale inside and outside of the office. They want the complete package.

This doctor friend of mine was only half the package. His opinion was that he had donated to charities and hosted school presentations in the past and "gotten nothing out of it." I explained the difference between an annual "school presentation" and establishing a school campaign consisting of several distinct programs, which create "arms and legs" on which your program can stand, reach out, and thrive. Ultimately, the goal is to touch the educators, fundraisers, and sports programs involved in your school system or whatever arena you choose to target.

The parent and adult demographics that you are targeting are willing to spend their hard earned dollars on a dream they have for themselves or their children. They are willing to sacrifice and are committed to making concessions in other areas in order to obtain a beautiful healthy smile. However, in this economy, these patients are more selective than ever when it comes to spending their hard-earned dollars. They demand excellence, customer service, and community involvement. You must be the brand and the name that gives these to them.

The next question my new doctor asked was, "Where do I start?" To which I answered that successful marketing is "all about ME." Allow me to elaborate....

There are 5 rules of ME that must be learned and followed in order to truly succeed at the marketing game:

1. **Maximum Exposure** – Think Nike, MasterCard... be everywhere you want to be. Be available to the schools, fundraisers, scouts, charities, and community, not just for the annual event but to create an entire campaign. Create press opportunities for the cause and for your support.
2. **Marketable Event** – Will you have an audience? If you are

going to be at an event, is this someplace that is destination or a high traffic? Take opportunities to make yourself known.

3. **Minimal Expense** – Affordable does not mean cheap. Look for opportunities to market that do not require a lot of money, but rely on making an appearance or utilizing your creativity to establish your name and brand.
4. **Masterful Execution** – Measure twice, cut once. Rehearse and use check lists. Have contingency plans and practice your conversation scripts. Always give your best effort and have no regrets.
5. **Memorable Experience** – The experience must feel, look, smell, taste, and sound amazing. This is the "WOW factor." This is your Signature Experience. Look for and create opportunities to parlay the event into additional touchpoints; e.g., community, patient, professional, and charitable efforts.

Now that you know the five keys to making your marketing all about ME, the next all important question is, "**How do we get everyone on board?**"

This begins with committing as a team to tracking your success every month. First, you must diagnosis your referral patterns during your monthly planning meetings. A monthly planning meeting by Peniche and Associates' definition follows these rules:

- The first two hours of every first Tuesday of every month, the team meets to review the previous month's goals and results.
- Every month a different team member facilitates the meeting agenda and sets goals for the current month based on the trailing 12 months and the same month the previous year.
- You will review and discuss patients with special needs, community projects, and schools as well as referral sources that need special attention and developing targets.

Here are some tips for diagnosing referral patterns:

Community referrals: These are typically thrown into the lovely category of Miscellaneous, but should be broken down into the areas of school programs, charitable events, tours, and the like. Track the results from each event, in other words, the number of referrals, since many times these events show up in your tracking of secondary referral sources.

What is a secondary referral source? Let's say Dr. Smith referred Lisa Jones to your practice; however, he actually gave her two or three names of local orthodontists. What was the deciding factor? Why did she call you? Was it just because he provided the name or did she recognize you through school programs, sporting events, fundraising, or possibly her website search? You

want to know the real answer and that is why you must track the secondary referral source to find the true “deciding factor.”

Patient referrals: What percentage of your practice is patient referred? Who are the top patient referrals? Most practices do not have a clue! The staff and doctor can tell me who won American Idol, Dancing with the Stars, the World Series, and the Super Bowl, but they can't tell me the top five referring families in their practice!

Once we know who our referring patients are, how do we thank them? Have we made it memorable? Were the gifts personal? Did the doctor make a thank you call?

Professional referrals: In our practice, each of our team members is responsible for tracking three to five doctors and giving a report each month on details of the referral pattern and current month. They will track the details of the dentist and the dentist team. This allows us to determine where the strongest referrals come from and how we can develop the weaker professional referrals. Remember to keep in mind that if you have a new referral source referring a lot of young children to you then your case acceptance may be low for that doctor because he is helping you build your savings account for the future.

The next area on the monthly planning meeting is **Existing and New Campaign Opportunities**, which includes community events (e.g., parades, health fairs, wedding fairs), school events, clubs, charitable events (Race for the Cure), and professional events.

Never forget that when determining what event warrants participation and is worth building a campaign upon, follow the primary rule: **Marketing is all about ME!**

When you follow this vital guideline, you will discover that it is simple to build a campaign and an image that is essentially you. You will find that creating campaigns that have many arms and legs will help you target diverse groups of people, broaden your reach and your influence, and define your Signature Brand. So go on, make that your goal. Become the Band-Aid brand of your community and watch as patients, families, and friends start using your name as the orthodontic standard. I know you can do it! ☺

About the Author



Founder and president of Peniche & Associates, LeeAnn Peniche has earned a reputation as one of the country's premier orthodontic consultants. She will present the keynote session at our 2010 Users Group Meeting.

For more information on Peniche & Associates Consulting Service or a complementary copy of Peniche & Associates monthly planning meeting agenda, e-mail info@leeannpenicheandassociates.com with your name, practice name, and request.